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LAMB AND WORDSWORTH: THE STORY OF A REMARKABLE FRIENDSHIP

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A large circle of friends meant much to Charles Lamb, as we all know: more perhaps than anything else in the world, - except of course for his sister's welfare, which always came first. And in line with Dr Johnson's prescription, he worked hard to keep his friendships in constant repair. The company of like-minded spirits brought moments of high jollity, even a kind of sublimity, to an existence that so often seemed tragic, thwarted, and lonely, like an endless journey through a dark tunnel. Lamb's largeness of heart, so much at variance with the reticences and inhibitions of our own day, has always to be reckoned with if we are to find the real person behind the mask of whimsicality that he so often adopted. For what is his magnanimity, but another way of describing his sureness of touch and sophistication as a critic, and his ability to step outside accepted canons of taste and recognise genius wherever it appeared?

Lamb's remarkable capacity for friendship was nowhere more searchingly tested than in his relationship with Wordsworth, which is my subject today, a relationship which lasted without a cloud for nearly forty years despite the distances and the formidable differences of temperament and outlook which divided them. Yet biographers and critics have fought shy of saying very much about it, as if the points of contact between them led off into byeways of criticism and away from the central preoccupations of each writer. This seems to me a mistaken view, and I would like to suggest ways in which discussion of their relationship can draw attention to aspects of their work which have not had the consideration they deserve.

On a superficial view Lamb and Wordsworth clearly have points of contact - as historians of that elusive entity 'Romanticism' will hasten to point out. They both had known, and conquered, despondency, putting their faith in what Keats called 'the holiness of the heart's affections', and writing out of their own personal experience. Both found a special significance in childhood memories, and were fascinated by the effects of Time. - And one could mention numerous other resemblances between them. But then consider the differences! Temperamentally they were poles apart. Lamb was gregarious and outgoing, a devotee of city streets, quite happy, when he set out to record his impressions, with what he calls (in the essay on *Imperfect Sympathies*) 'fragments and scattered pieces of Truth...hints and glimpses, germs and crude essays at a system.' Whereas Wordsworth was quite the opposite; utterly absorbed in his role as the poet and prophet of Nature, aloof, serious, and didactic. He had the comprehensive mind of a philosopher, as John Stuart Mill noted. 'My friendship is not in my power to give,' Wordsworth wrote to De Quincey in 1803, when that aspiring young scholar was trying to cultivate his acquaintance:

> this is a gift which no man can make, it is not in our own power: a

> sound and healthy friendship is the growth of time and circumstance, it will spring and thrive like a wild flower when these favour, and when they do not, it is in vain to look for it.

You will also recall the sonnet he wrote at Dove Cottage about the same period, entitled *Personal Talk*:

> I am not One who much or oft delight
> To season my fireside with personal talk, -
> Of friends, who live within an easy walk,
> Or neighbours, daily, weekly in my sight ...
> Better than such discourse doth silence long,
> Long, barren silence, square with my desire ...

Not a very promising basis, you might think, for friendship with an ebullient character like Charles Lamb! What did they really have in common? And by what strange discipline of circumstances were they led to forge such deep bonds of mutual sympathy and understanding with each other in spite of all their differences?

Their first contacts were not very promising. Lamb probably met Wordsworth for the first time in London in 1796 at the suggestion of Coleridge, who had shown Lamb Wordsworth's new poem *Salisbury Plain*. What impression they made on each other, assuming they did meet, we have no means of knowing. But when Lamb visited Coleridge at Nether Stowey in Somerset in July of the following year, and found Wordsworth and his sister there before their move to nearby Alfoxden, Lamb and Wordsworth were thrown into each other's company for long enough to make a genuine exchange of confidences possible. It was the occasion, you will remember, of Coleridge's accidental injury to his foot, which kept him at home, and led to the composition of the conversation-poem *This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison*, in which in imagination he follows his friends on their expedition through that lovely countryside. By this time Lamb had read more of Wordsworth's poetry, including an early version of *The Ruined Cottage*, and parts of his tragedy *The Borderers*, and it had clearly made a great impact on him. But was there a real meeting of minds on this occasion? Neither Wordsworth nor Dorothy mention their new friend in their letters thereafter, and Lamb is cold and non-committal in his references to them. Was he jealous of Coleridge's obvious *rapport* with them? The picture of bonhomie which Coleridge evokes seems to be quite literally a figment of his imagination, appropriate to the mood of the poem, but quite possibly at variance with the real situation. Lamb and Wordsworth were both passing through periods of turmoil and re-adjustment, which must have made them reticent and edgy. The violent death of Lamb's mother and the insanity and confinement of his sister was less than a year behind him. He was trapped for life in a situation he had somehow to come to terms with. Wordsworth was haunted by his experiences in revolutionary France, and only painfully regaining his emotional equilibrium. What would be more natural than that an initial reticence should have inhibited the frank exchange of confidences that would have launched their new friendship? Whatever it was, Lamb does not seem to have mixed happily with the Quantock circle; though he was haunted by Wordsworth's *Lines Left upon a Seat in a Yew Tree*, as if they spoke in some special way to his own tragic dilemma.

Their next contact, about a year after the Wordsworths had settled at Grasmere, was not much warmer on either side, though by this time Lamb knew more of Wordsworth's poetry. But in the course of acknowledging the gift of the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (and an invitation to the Lakes), Lamb showed himself an independent and shrewd critic. 'An intelligent reader', he complains in a telling comment on the didacticism of *The Old Cumberland Beggar*, 'finds a sort of insult in being told, I will teach you how to think upon this subject'. He was clearly impressed by *Tintern Abbey* and *Hartleap Well*, but his highest praise was reserved for Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* ('For me, I was never so affected with any human Tale.'). He was also uneasy - and how right he was - about Wordsworth's decision to include an essentially theoretical preface along with poems of touching human experience. His letter is in fact curiously detached, almost prickly, and he goes out of his way to disown any sympathy with Wordsworth's love of Nature:

> Separate from the pleasure of your company, I don't much care if I never see a mountain in my life. - I have passed all my days in London, until I have formed as many and intense local attachments, as any of your Mountaineers can have done with dead nature. The Lighted shops of the Strand and Fleet Street, the innumerable trades, tradesmen and customers, coaches, waggons, playhouses, all the bustle and wickedness round about Covent Garden, the very women of the Town, the Watchmen, drunken scenes...life awake...at all hours of the night... the crowds, the very dirt and mud, the Sun shining upon houses and pavements, the print shops, the old Book stalls...coffee houses, steams of soups from kitchens, the pantomimes, London itself, a pantomime and a masquerade, - all these things work themselves into my mind and feed me, without a power of satiating me. The wonder of these sights impells me into night-walks about her crowded streets, and I often shed tears in the motley Strand from fulness of joy at so much life. - All these emotions must be strange to you. So are your rural emotions to me.

And then, at the end of this catalogue of differences, in which he becomes quite carried away, he adds a parting shot, 'Thank you for liking my play!', as if he had been finally put out by Wordsworth's merely polite interest in *John Woodvil*. Wordsworth, on his side, felt compelled to take up Lamb's criticisms of his poems, as Lamb reported in not very flattering terms to his friend Manning; but he was simply not prepared to defer to Wordsworth's egotism. Each was in fact very much on his dignity, and keeping the other at arms length. When Charles and Mary Lamb finally came to the Lakes in August 1802, they stayed with Coleridge and did not see the Wordsworths, who were away in Calais on a visit to Wordsworth's 'French' daughter, Caroline.

And yet within weeks the situation was radically transformed: William and Dorothy Wordsworth saw a good deal of the Lambs in London on their return from the Continent, just before the poet's marriage, and the foundations were laid for a deep and lasting intimacy. What broke down the barriers between them? The decisive factor, I suspect, was Dorothy Wordsworth's respect and admiration for Mary Lamb, whom they now got to know for the first time, and her instinctive appreciation of the tie that bound brother and sister together in their tragic predicament. Here, as elsewhere, Dorothy seems to have played a vital role in leading her brother's sympathies in new directions, showing him that at the most fundamental level he and Lamb had much more in common than either of them had ever realised. In Lamb's solicitude for his sister, Wordsworth would see a mirror-image of his own. They were united by fundamental human affinities, 'the qualities which are common to all men as opposed to those which distinguish one man from another', and not by merely literary sympathies.

Another factor in binding the group more closely together in the following years was undoubtedly Lamb's admiration for William and Dorothy's sailor brother John. When Capt. John Wordsworth was tragically drowned in the wreck of the *Abergavenny* in Weymouth Bay in February 1805, Lamb was indefatigable in making enquiries on their behalf, and his unaffected solicitude made a deep impression. His letters to them have a transparent sincerity about them which is deeply moving; for it is expressed with utter simplicity:

> 'To people oppressed with feeling, the loss of a good-humoured happy man that has been friendly with them, is bad enough. But you must cultivate his spirits, as a legacy: and believe that such as he cannot be lost.'

The grief they shared drew them together, and if (as is sometimes suggested) Lamb adopted a mask before the world, he certainly laid it aside with the Wordsworths. When Wordsworth and Coleridge quarrelled in 1811, Lamb was a tactful intermediary between them, though he failed to heal the breach. Their circle continued to grow with the years. To the Coleridges, Southeys and Clarksons were in time added Crabb Robinson the diarist; Mary Wordsworth's amiable cousin Thomas Monkhouse, a London merchant; Barron Field, Wordsworth's acutest textual critic; Talfourd, later to be his ally in the Copyright struggle in Parliament; and Edward Moxon, the most generous of Wordsworth's publishers, who married Lamb's adopted daughter Emma Isola. The Wordsworths now had several congenial ports of call on their visits to the metropolis, where news of absent friends could be exchanged. Visitors to Rydal Mount in turn brought news of the Lambs. When Wordsworth's son Willy was sent down to the Charterhouse, Lamb's house became a second home to him.

Literary differences no longer seemed to matter. Lamb came to recognise that drama and verse were not his forte, and turned, with Wordsworth's approval, to the familiar essay. And so Elia was born. Wordsworth for his part, though always sensitive to any whiff of criticism, came to place implicit trust in Lamb's literary judgment. He saluted him as an 'exquisite' prose-writer whose letters, in ease of manner, somehow contrived to appear continuations of his essays, whereas his own (as he recognised) were somewhat stiff and formal. The blame lay with an over-zealous schoolmaster, he complained to a correspondent, who had held up Dr Johnson as a model for him to imitate early in life. Hardly surprising though, when Wordsworth is writing to Lamb, his own style becomes more animated, as an amusing letter of 1818 - a newly-discovered one at Dove Cottage - about Hazlitt's portraits of Wordsworth and Coleridge, shows:

> He tried his hand upon me [Wordsworth writes]. My brother Richard happened to come into the room where his work was suspended, saw, stopt, I believe recoiled, and exclaimed *God Zounds!* a criticism as emphatic as it was concise. He was literally struck with the strength of the sign-board likeness; but never, till that moment, had he conceived that so much of the diabolical lurked under the innocent features of his quondam playmate, and respected Friend and dear Brother. Devils may be divided into two large classes, first, the malignant and mischievous, - those who are bent upon all of evil-doing that is prayed against in the Litany; and secondly those which have so thorough a sense of their own damnation, and the misery consequent upon it, as to be incapable of labouring a thought injurious to the tranquility of others. The pencil of Mr W.H. is potent in delineating both kinds of

> physiognomy. My portrait is an example of the one; and a Picture of Coleridge, now in existence at Keswick (mine has been burnt) is of the other. This piece of art is not producable for fear of fatal consequences to married Ladies, but is kept in a private room, as a special treat to those who may wish to sup upon horrors.

That is not in the usual Wordsworthian vein! Nor is his description of local society:

> I wish to hear from you... You are better off than we - inasmuch as London contains one person whose conversation is worth listenting to - whereas here we are in an utter desert, notwithstanding we have a very amiable and edifying Parson; an intelligent Doctor, an honest Attorney (for he is without practice), a Lady of the Manor, who has a spice of the romantic; Landscape Painters who are fraught with admiration, at least of their own works; Irish Refugees, and Liverpool Bankrupts without number.

It is a reminder of a satirical bent in Wordsworth that is often overlooked, the 'convulsive inclination to laughter about the mouth, a good deal at variance with the solemn, stately expression of the rest of his face', noticed by Hazlitt at Alfoxden.

Lamb's reputation as a discriminating critic of the Lake poets made him a natural choice to review the *Excursion* in the *Quarterly* in 1814, after Jeffrey had savaged it in the *Edinburgh Review*. But the whole strategy misfired. The review was mangled almost beyond recognition by Gifford, the editor, Lamb was thoroughly annoyed, and Wordsworth himself deeply humiliated. Yet the review remains a valuable discussion of a vastly underestimated poem, and a revelation of Lamb's strengths as a critic. He grasped the dialogue structure and the way the poem sets out to present the appearances of Nature as symbols or emblems of higher truths, in order (as he says) 'to abate the pride of the calculating *understanding*, and to reinstate the imagination and the affections in those seats from which modern philosophy has laboured but too successfully to expel them'; and if he missed the larger drift of Wordsworth's thinking and his religious stance (matters that have only been clarified in recent years by research into Wordsworth's sources), he amply compensated for this by his appreciation of particular passages, like the story of Margaret, the churchyard tales, the evocations of ancient religions, and the sunset splendour of the closing movement. Lamb was in low spirits at the time: 'I write with great difficulty...I am a poor creature, but I am leaving off Gin. I hope you will see good will in the thing.' And he was furious with Gifford for ruining 'the prettiest piece of prose I ever writ.' But characteristically, he felt much more put out for his friend's sake: 'How are *you* served! and the labours of years turn'd into contempt by scoundrels.' He saw no tension between loyalty to his friend and his integrity as a critic.

Both men in fact had more than an average share of disappointment and suffering. Lamb's letters to the Wordsworths are full of references to his sister's periodical bouts of insanity, and the loneliness and desolation to which he was reduced. 'My theory is to enjoy life', he was to write in 1822, 'but the practise is against it.' He was weighed down by the distraction and incessant drudgery of the East India Office, from which he was only finally 'superannuated' in 1825. 'Thirty years have I served the Philistines, and my neck is not subdued to the yoke.' Wordsworth, too, had known the most cruel losses in his family, and there were more to come in the future, as the illnesses of his sister and daughter cast a long shadow over his later years at Rydal Mount. He was also permanently disabled by eye-disease. But there were moments when, for all their dutiful stoicism before the world, they made common cause against the demons of despondency. One memorable occasion was the 'immortal' dinner given by Benjamin Robert Haydon the painter in 1817 to bring together the youthful Keats and the author of the *Excursion*. You will recall that the festivities were interrupted at their height by the arrival of Wordsworth's superior at the Stamp Office, whose skull and phrenological development Lamb offered to examine, in a fit of tipsy exuberance. Haydon's nostalgic recollections surely recreate for all time the harmless conviviality and mirth of the occasion, and the outrageous acceptance of life that informed it:

> It was indeed an immortal evening. Wordsworth's fine intonation as he quoted Milton and Virgil, Keats's eager inspired look, Lamb's quaint sparkle of lambent humour, so speeded the stream of conversation, that in my life I never passed a more delightful time. All our fun was within bounds. Not a word passed that an apostle might not have listened to. It was a night worthy of the Elizabethan age, and my solemn Jerusalem flashing up by the flame of the fire, with Christ hanging over us like a vision, all made up a picture which will long glow upon
>
> that inward eye
> Which is the bliss of solitude

Ben Jonson's supper-parties cannot have been closer, one feels, to the classic Horatian ideal than this 'immortal' dinner.

Lamb continued to greet each of Wordsworth's volumes with sympathy and discrimination. These are indeed the hall-marks of his criticism. He has an eye for the unexpected, but keeps his head, and periodically raises the awkward questions that have continued to exercise Wordsworth's critics up to the present time, the justification for the final classification of his poems, for example. Above all, he saw from the start that it was Wordsworth's vision of humanity that was important, his ability (as he says) 'to write with a finger of power upon our hearts', rather than the niceties of his critical theories which had been discussed interminably and often unprofitably, and which undoubtedly held up the recognition of his genius for a couple of decades. Most of all, perhaps, he enjoyed Wordsworth's dedication to himself of *The Waggoner*, and all that it implied for their common veneration for the genius of Robert Burns. 'Benjamin is no common favourite', he writes,

> ' - there is a spirit of beautiful tolerance in it - it is as good as it was in 1806 [when he first heard it] - and will be as good in 1829 if our dim eyes shall be awake to peruse it. Methinks there is a kind of shadowing affinity between the subject of the narrative and the subject of the dedication...'

It is the poem in which Wordsworth is closest in spirit to Burns, and therefore in a real sense closest to Lamb. It is also one of the least appreciated of his longer poems, possibly because we are too reluctant to believe that he could produce such a relaxed and humorous vision of humanity. Like *The Idiot Boy*, with which it has something in common, it challenges our sympathies in unexpected ways. That Lamb could respond to it so wholeheartedly is surely in itself the strongest recommendation that we should reconsider our own response to the poem?

The two friends faced the inevitable losses and diminishments of old age with courage and equanimity. 'Every departure destroys a class of sympathies', Lamb complained wistfully, as his circle of friends was reduced, just as the earlier set of the Wordsworths had been broken by the sailor brother's death many years before. The end for Lamb himself came quite suddenly, at the close of 1834, a few days after a fall in the street. He was not quite sixty. Wordsworth had another fifteen years of life ahead of him, as a much venerated public figure; but he devoted himself wholeheartedly to protecting his friend's memory, and set himself to compose a lasting memorial 'to the dear memory of a frail good Man'.

The tribute to Lamb, 'the frolic and the gentle', in the catalogue of departed friends in Wordsworth's *Extempore Effusion Upon the Death of James Hogg* one of the greatest poems of his later years, is well known. Much less familiar, however, but equally characteristic of the poet, are the lines *Written After the Death of Charles Lamb*. The growth of the poem may be traced in minute detail in the letters, some of them unpublished, and this can be a deeply instructive exercise, because the two friends are brought into a more meaningful relationship as the poem grows. The first 38 lines, up to 'O, he was good, if e'er a good Man lived!', were composed, at Mary Lamb's request, as an 'epitaph', and were immediately printed off by Moxon for private circulation. They were, in the words of the first *Essay upon Epitaphs* (a work, incidentally, which Lamb much admired), a 'record to preserve the memory of the dead, as a tribute due to his individual worth, for a satisfaction to the sorrowing hearts of the survivors, and for the common benefit of the living.' But the poem soon outgrew its original purpose, and turned into an elegy or monody in which the poet, freed from the constraints of the epitaph but avoiding panegyric altogether, was able to offer a judicious and balanced appreciation of his friend's outstanding characteristics.

He insisted, for example, much to Mary Lamb's dismay, on celebrating Lamb's devotion to duty at the East India Office. Lamb, he writes,

> ...humbly earned his bread,
> To the strict labours of the merchant's desk
> By duty chained. Not seldom did those tasks
> Tease, and the thought of them so spent depress,
> His spirit, but the recompense was high;
> Firm Independence, Bounty's rightful sire;
> Affections, warm as sunshine, free as air ...

Not a very *genteel* picture: but it reflects the Wordsworthian ideal of rugged independence, embodied in Margaret, Michael and the leech-gatherer, and typified in the poet's own decision to accept the drudgery of a Distributor of Stamps among his beloved Lakes rather than the more lucrative employment he was offered elsewhere. Lamb is justified on Wordsworthian terms, in fact. And equally relevant to the poet himself is the long passage he added on Lamb's love for his sister, which he saw as the bedrock of his existence. Mary Lamb, he writes, 'the meek...the ever kind', was one

> In whom thy reason and intelligent heart
> Found - for all interests, hopes, and tender cares,
> All softening, humanising, hallowing powers,
> Whether witheld, or for her sake unsought -
> More than sufficient recompense!

Charles and Mary Lamb become assimilated to the type of the lonely figure buffeted by the elements, a Wordsworthian symbol for the human predicament itself:

> Thus, 'mid a shifting world,
> Did they together testify of time
> And season's difference - a double tree
> With two collateral stems sprung from one root ...

Surely, here too, Wordsworth is reflecting on his own relationship with his sister? Hardly surprisingly, Dorothy on her sickbed seems to have thought so, because in a letter of two years later she speaks of Mary Lamb surviving her brother, 'a solitary twig - patiently enduring the storm of life', and shortly afterwards she uses similar imagery herself about her own struggles:

> I have fought and fretted and striven - and am here beside the fire. The Doves behind me at the small window - the laburnum with its naked seed-pods shivers before my window, and the pine trees rock from their base.'

The whole poem deserves much closer attention than it has ever been given, not only for its wise and just estimate of Lamb, but also for what it tells us about the poet himself. Surely there is much more in these later poems of Wordsworth than is often realised?

Wordsworth in the end saw a type of heroism in Charles Lamb, the heroism of resignation, endurance and hope. These were the values Wordsworth lived by himself, and the qualities which Thoreau recognised in his simple rural lifestyle at Rydal Mount. It was of course very far from the type of heroism that Thomas Carlyle was celebrating at much the same time in his lecture hall in London: for him the hero should dominate circumstances, and he found Lamb an 'emblem of imbecility, bodily and spiritual'. 'Poor England,' he exclaims elsewhere, 'when such a despicable abortion is named genius!' Wordsworth's assessment is quite different, and much closer to De Quincey's, who maintained that

> the whole range of history scarcely represents a more affecting spectacle of perpetual sorrow, humiliation, or conflict, and that was supported to the end (that is, through forty years), with more resignation, or with more absolute victory.

Wordsworth, too, celebrated Lamb's sheer triumph over circumstances. His own last years show him, in turn, bending a passionate, stubborn nature to the inevitable diminishments, the losses and compromises of old age, but finding in the end, 'the years that bring philosophic mind'.

A NOTE ON LAMB'S "OLD BENCHERS": Lamb's 'Intimations'

V S Seturaman

Attention has been paid to the poetic qualities of Lamb's essays. Oliver Elton wrote long ago: The Essays of Elia "are, in essence, *poems*, in so far, that is, as they are not the work of the 'understanding,' ...but proceed from the brooding fancy which softens the lines of the past, and purges its dross, mysteriously, without blurring or falsification of the truth" (*A Survey of English Literature: 1780-1830*, Vol.II (1912; rpt, London: Edward Arnold, 1965), p.350). Dr Ian Jack went a step further and said that the essays are "personal memories 'recollected in tranquillity,' and recollected in such a manner that whatever had been disturbing in the original experiences had been alembicated off" (*Oxford History of English Literature 1815-1832* (Oxford, 1963), pp.289-90). Thus Ian Jack by implication brings Lamb nearer Wordsworth. But very few have noted the more positively Wordsworthian quality of Lamb's essays with their emphasis on the functioning of the Imagination, their childhood vision of the world, and their longing to recover the lost visionary gleam.

The essay "The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple" is an instance in point. Its ostensible subject is the presentation of some portraits; but the real theme is the contrast between reason on the one hand and imagination and an intuitive awareness of the world on the other. Shall we call the essay Lamb's version of the "Intimations" Ode? Lamb is doing it in prose and yet how close is the correspondence in diction and imagery between the essay and the poem. The concluding paragraph which states the theme and provides the perspective reads as follows:

> Fantastic forms,whither are ye *fled*? Or, if the like of you exist, why exist they no more for me? Ye inexplicable, half-understood appearances, *why comes in reason* to tear away the preternatural mist, *bright* or gloomy, that enshrouded you? Why make ye so sorry a figure in my relation, who made up to me - to my *childish* eyes - the mythology of the Temple? In those days I saw Gods, as "*old men covered with a mantle*," walking upon the earth. Let the dreams of classic idolatry perish, - extinct be the fairies and fairy trumpery of legendary fabling, in the heart of childhood there will, for ever, spring up a well of innocent or wholesome superstition - the seeds of exaggeration will be busy there, and vital - from every-day forms educing the unknown and the uncommon. In that little Goshen there will be light when the grown world flounders about in the *darkness of sense and materiality*. While childhood, and while dreams, *reducing* childhood, shall be left, imagination shall not have spread her holy wings totally to fly the earth [emphasis added].

The imagery of light and darkness, the "childish eyes" (echoing the phrase "childish thought" of Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty") seeing things enshrouded in a "preternatural mist, bright or gloomy" (compare Wordsworth's "apparelled in celestial light"), the world of childhood described as a little Goshen, a place of light, and the world of the adult floundering about in the "darkness of sense and materiality" should recall the well-known and much discussed passage in Wordsworth's "Intimations" where the poet addresses the child as:

> Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!
> On whom those truths do rest,
> Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
> In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
> ... ...
> [To whom the grave
> Is but a lonely bed without the sense or sight
> Of day or the warm light,
> A place of thought where we in waiting lie;]

Wilson Knight called them "pregnant images" picturing to us "the worst sufferings of our intellectualized existence" ("The Wordsworthian Profundity," in *The Starlit Dome* (London: OUP, 1971), p.47). Reason (and swearing by facts) is our worst enemy; it tears away the "preternatural mist." Even as the adult is described in Wordsworth as "toiling" in darkness lost, Lamb's grown-up man is floundering about in the darkness of sense and materiality. The child's way of looking at things leads to life and greater life. The light of reason is nothing but darkness. The visionary gleam is lost. Things fade into the light of common day as one grows old.

Examined in this perspective the whole essay comes to life. The half-serious questions about the fountains, sun-dials, allegorical pictures, the Paradise Lost in the opening paragraphs leading to

> Lawyers, I suppose, were children once. They are awakening images to them at least. Why must everything smack of man, and mannish? Is the world all grown up? Is childhood dead?

prepare us for the portraits with their oddities, and the closing paragraph where they are called "fantastic forms" (meaning forms created by Imagination) is a fitting climax. Lamb's postscript and the long letter addressed to the editor about the inaccurate details in the essay provide the same contrast - that between life and art - verity and verisimilitude - at a lower level or key.

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A NEW CONVERSATION POEM BY COLERIDGE?

Richard Gravil

Coleridge's finest poems are so much beset by dread, that the presence of this existential mood in a given poem might almost be used as the touchstone of poetic power. Geraldine occasions dread; the Mariner requires it, and his sanctified counterpart in Kubla Khan inspires it. Coleridge himself, even in the protective seclusion of a lime-tree bower, is inexplicably prey to it, as he thinks of 'Friends, whom I never more may meet again' (such a line, in this context, is either ludicrous or *angstvoll*, one cannot read it neutrally). In the 'Dejection' poems - prefaced, ominously, by a relique of ancient foreboding - Coleridge not only gives to dread its most vivid poetic expression, but tracks it down to its inner springs, the terrors of self-mistrust and self-alienation. 'My genial spirits fail': a truly dread-ful thought since 'In our life alone does Nature live'. Joy, love and power proceed from the inmost self. One may know and experience this, and be one of 'the family of love', or else one belongs in exile with 'the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd', sharing its alienation from beauty, love and power.

To the author of *The Friend*, moreover, 'The first step to knowledge, or rather the previous condition of all insight into truth, is to dare commune with our very and permanent self' (*The Friend*, 1818, volume 1, Essay xvi). Such communion - conducted with such a burden of dreadful responsibility - is the matter of Coleridge's finest conversation poems. For the finest of these poems, from one perspective, are those in which Coleridge experiments with the boundaries of selfhood, observing himself intently in his encounters with the outer world, and noting that such reflection may image a multiplicity of selves. Together, the dread of lovelessness and the love of truth create the pathos of the authentically Coleridgean poem.

No one, I believe, has seriously objected to G M Harper's extension of the term 'Conversation Poem' to cover not only 'The Nightingale' (the only poem so designated by Coleridge) but 'The Eolian Harp', 'Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement', 'This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison', 'Frost at Midnight', 'Fears in Solitude', 'Dejection' and 'To William Wordsworth'. And most of us, I imagine, would agree that the term 'conversation poem' means something. What it means is that a given poem exhibits some or all of a list of characteristics - on the exact constitution of which we are less likely to agree. Conversation poems share more than a conversational cadence. They are written in the style of intimate address to an unspeaking but friendly auditor. In most cases we know who that auditor is - there are poems to Mrs Coleridge, Dorothy, Sara Hutchinson, William, Charles and Hartley. The poems are in some cases acts of friendship, employing a generous self-extension as part of a process of self-apprehension. When discussing them, few of us would think the term 'persona' very relevant: 'I' is unambivalently Coleridge in propria persona, and for that matter, in precisely stated or implied biographical contexts. Speaker, auditor, place, time, and condition, are unusually explicit: Coleridge, in other words, is ignoring his critical precepts as expressed in the *Biographia*, and dealing with the personal and the particular.

In the better conversation poems, too, the setting becomes, as John Danby said, 'a partner in the thinking', stimulating the poet's meditation, and helping to shape the poem by steering the linear mind into the spirals and globes of organic form - the poems return upon themselves. The poems breathe, within a living world, as Coleridge communes with his self.

How many of the conversation poems in fact meet all of these criteria? No one, surely, would dispute that 'Frost at Midnight' and 'This Lime-Tree Bower' and the Dejection poems are of this order. But do we find such richness and flexibility throughout the canon? The poetic diction, the emblems, and the elegant antitheses of 'The Eolian Harp' betray its early date,* as do the bracing slogans and allegorical flourishes of 'Reflections': an element of complacent pietism in both poems repels the reader who comes to them from the fully achieved poems of Nether Stowey. Compared with the best poems even 'The Nightingale' is a one-dimensional piece - a stylish sketch, rather than a working model - while 'Fears in Solitude' is a public sermon in scant disguise. If, in other words, we aggregate the virtues of the conversation poems and insist upon them as criteria, the canon shrinks. We may prefer, instead, to ease the criteria.

Only the latter course will do if a new conversation poem is to be admitted to the inner circle. The candidate is composed in rhymed tetrameters, though loosely paragraphed. The poem implies no particular date or place, and has no auditor but God. It is, in short, contextless, friendless, and unconversational. On the other hand, it has the essential debate and development that 'The Nightingale' lacks; it achieves form, as 'Fears' and 'Reflections' do not; and its existential pathos displaces their more formal rhetoric. Above all, it is a poem in which Coleridgean selves encounter and converse.

In 'The Pains of Sleep' Coleridge communes with three carefully precipitated states of his own consciousness: a composed and reverential soul, a divided brawling self, and a strangely knowing consciousness contemplating that inner division. The poem falls into three movements, the first of them *adagio*.

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*The beautiful unrhymed couplets inserted in late revisions catch and intensify this Augustanism.

> Ere on my bed my limbs I lay,
> It hath not been my use to pray
> With moving lips or bended knees;
> My spirit I to love compose,
> In humble trust mine eye-lids close,
> With reverential resignation,
> No wish conceived, no thought exprest,
> Only a sense of supplication;
> A sense o'er all my soul imprest
> That I am weak, yet not unblest,
> Since in me, round me, everywhere
> Eternal Strength and Wisdom are.

The music of repose is beautifully wrought: the long vowels of the first six lines, and their deliberate slow verbs, conjure the sense of habituation. There is the expected sense of physicality. The verse breathes quietly between the quiet reciprocal verbs 'exprest...imprest...blest'. There is a latent image slowly building, that of the everlasting arms cradling the vulnerable soul, taking the weight. Benediction is almost tangible. Yet something about the passage, beyond its reiteration of 'no', 'not' and 'only', suggests a counter-theme. Beneath that slow composing of the self to love is the implication of other states: the ritual is designed to bring himself into line with what he is not. The ritual approach to 'Eternal Strength and Wisdom' seeks to suppress a fear. There is a coyness about the obtrusively undemanding mode of supplication. Perhaps those 'moving lips and bended knees' are closer than one thought to the real need. And indeed, *allegro energico* marks the second movement.

> But yesternight I prayed aloud
> In anguish and in agony,
> Up-starting from the fiendish crowd
> Of shapes and thoughts that tortured me:
> A lurid light, a trampling throng,
> Sense of intolerable wrong,
> And whom I scorned, those only strong!
> Thirst of revenge, the powerless will
> Still baffled, and yet burning still!
> Desire with loathing strangely mixed
> On wild or hateful objects fixed.
> Fantastic passions! Maddening brawl!
> And shame and terror over all!
> Deeds to be hid which were not hid,
> Which all confused I could not know
> Whether I suffered, or I did:
> For all seemed guilt, remorse or woe,
> Mine own or others' still the same
> Life-stifling fear, soul-stifling shame.

Here everything is reversed instantaneously. The powerfully stressed verse is made more stressful by sustained patterns of assonance and a clatter of alliterations, the speed of the verse crowding these effects together, from the starting point 'In anguish and In agonY' to the concluding 'LiFe-stiFling Fear, soul-stiFling shame'. Everything that was so painstakingly excluded from the verse and the consciousness of the first movement now floods in: the anguish, the torturing thoughts and corrosive passions, scorn and fear, pride and envy, vengeance and shame.

In 'desire with loathing strangely mixed' the vaguer *angst* of the Dejection poems is given a precisely Kierkegaardian resolution: and from this existential Dread, the descent is immediate into the loss of self, or Despair. 'It is a most instructive part of my life, the fact that I have always been preyed upon by some Dread, and perhaps all my faulty actions have been the consequence of some Dread or other on my mind' (*Notebooks*,ii, 2398). The placid self of the first movement, so tenuously attained, is beset by passions, paralysed in dread, and at the end of the second movement, lost entirely to itself.

The third movement, then, begins with a problem for the reader: which of Coleridge's selves is speaking? The movement is, in the main, *andante*, if a touch *maestoso* towards the end:

> So two nights passed: the night's dismay
> Saddened and stunned the coming day.
> Sleep, the wide blessing, seemed to me
> Distemper's worst calamity.
> The third night, when my own loud scream
> Had waked me from the fiendish dream,
> O'ercome with sufferings strange and wild,
> I wept as I had been a child;
> And having thus by tears subdued
> My anguish to a milder mood,
> Such punishments, I said, were due
> To natures deepliest stained with sin, -
> For aye entempesting anew
> The unfathomable hell within,
> The horror of their deeds to view,
> To know and loathe, yet wish and do!
> Such griefs with such men well agree,
> But wherefore, wherefore fall on me?
> To be beloved is all I need,
> And whom I love, I love indeed.

A resolution, of sorts, is accomplished to the speaker's satisfaction. Grateful for the 'flood of tears' (he has read 'The Ancient Mariner'), the speaker is confident in his renewed right to sleep's 'wide blessing'. But a flood of tears is not the same as a spring of love. And nothing could be less Mariner-like than the self-righteousness, the self-pitying petulance, of those last ten lines. Something of an act of self-deception seems to be in train.

The speaker seems oblivious that 'the unfathomable hell within' is a description of his own experiences in the second movement: he has effectively displaced it onto those who are 'deepliest' stained with sin. It is now the others, not he, who 'know and loathe, yet wish and do', and such people get what they deserve (a coarse phrase, but it is a coarse movement the speaker is making). There is something not a little smug about the concluding couplet, too:

> To be beloved is all I need,
> And whom I love, I love indeed.

Of course, a conversation poem which begins with love must end with love: the circular structure is expected. But whereas the usual conversation poem returns to its opening imagery with an intensification, and added value, what we have here is an unmistakable diminution, and not merely from divine to human love. This diminution may indeed explain, diagnostically, the preceding restlessness: for we see in the final couplet a self-deceiving modulation from unconditional demand to selective bestowal - 'whom I love, I love indeed'. The divine love is given; Coleridge's, he seems to say, has to be earned, and 'whom I scorned' is also scorned indeed.

'The Pains of Sleep' begins and ends in apparent calm. Its smug conclusion (I am better than other men, so I do not deserve their torments) parallels its complacent opening (I am better than other men, so I do not have their need of prayer). The same structure which probes the fallacy of the opening composure, questions the affected resolution. This revealing structure exhibits also the ease with which guilt may be externalised, and what belongs to me may be projected onto the other. One feels the need to distinguish between the Coleridge who is writing the poem, and the Coleridge who is speaking (or the Coleridges who are speaking), and to assume - as I have done - that the speaker of the last ten lines especially is subject to the author's irony. If we make such distinctions and such assumptions we find a poem about the contingency which is the only permanent condition of the human soul; about the ease of self-deception, and its manoeuvres; about the flimsiness of the veils which we interpose between ourselves and despair.

On the other hand, of course, 'The Pains of Sleep' may be a set of self-deceiving tetrameters best left in a decent obscurity. A new conversation poem, or not?

THE ENGLISHMAN'S MAGAZINE

Claude A Prance

Among Charles Lamb's many acts of kindness was the introduction of Edward Moxon to Samuel Rogers the banker poet. This took place about 1824 and Moxon was then working for Longman the publisher at 39 Paternoster Row. Lamb was later to describe him to Wordsworth as "one of Longman's best hands",[1] and Rogers liking the young man they became friends. When in 1826 Moxon published his first volume of poems *The Prospect and Other Poems* he dedicated it to Samuel Rogers.

Edward Moxon was an ambitious and hard working Yorkshireman and not satisfied with his prospects at Longmans left them about 1828 for another publisher, Hurst, Chance & Co. Thomas Hurst had been a partner with Longman before starting his own business and knew Moxon from that time. Moxon, who was an intelligent man, may have acted as his literary adviser,[2] but even here did not find enough scope for his activities and left Hurst in 1830 after Samuel Rogers offered to lend him £500 to start business as a publisher on his own.[3] He opened in June 1830 at 64 New Bond Street.

As is well known Edward Moxon became greatly attracted to Emma Isola, the young girl adopted by Charles and Mary Lamb, and he was consequently a frequent visitor to their house. They raised no objection to the attachment which eventually resulted in Emma becoming Mrs Moxon. To help the young publisher Charles allowed him to publish his *Album Verses* as his first book, and during the few years left to Elia he did all he could to further Moxon's interests by encouraging his friends to publish their work through the new publisher and allowing him to publish his own.

In April 1831 Hurst, Chance & Co. issued from their office at 65 St Paul's Churchyard the first number of *The Englishman's Magazine*. The editors were William Kennedy, a poet and miscellaneous writer and Leitch Ritchie, a novelist and journalist.[4] Both were Scotsmen and had been concerned with editing the Annuals, much in favour at that time.

The magazine which was to be issued monthly bore a portrait of Daniel Defoe on its cover and claimed to represent the principles of the "True Born Englishman", prominent among which were said to be "Freedom of Conscience, Freedom of Trade and Freedom for the privileges of the Commons of England." The first item was headed "Our Principles" and James Dykes Campbell writing in 1889 described it as "three windy pages...remarkable even among prospectuses, for riotous optimism."[5]

The journal cost 2s 6d, contained around 130 pages and included criticism, essays, poems, sections on the fine arts, music, drama and a list of new books. It also covered current affairs and was a journal of reform, a subject then much in the public eye. Articles appeared on politics, the Reform Bill and the Slavery Question, the last being the concern of Thomas Pringle a contributor who was also secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society, and with the July issue a separate pamphlet on the subject was included.

Generally the contents of the magazine in its early numbers were undistinguished, although William Inglis's "Recent Rambles in the Footsteps of Dox Quixote" was not without interest. John Forster contributed papers on "Our Early Patriots" and John Galt had a short story. In the June issue an article appeared entitled "Extraordinary Case of the Royal Associates of the Royal Society of Literature" which dealt with the withdrawal of the pensions made to the Associates following the death of George IV. S T Coleridge was among these and was mentioned by name. A further article appeared in the July issue and as a result of these and correspondence in *The Times* and elsewhere, and the efforts of Coleridge's friends, he was given a sum of £300 in lieu of the pension which had been a personal payment by the sovereign and was not to be continued by William IV, John Hookham Frere finally made up what Coleridge had lost in consequence.[6]

The magazine continued as it had started, but had attracted no writers of the first class and cannot have been a financial success. One of the editors, Leitch Ritchie, ceased to act through illness[7] and after four issues Hurst, Chance & Co. decided to dispose of the periodical. It seems uncertain how long Kennedy continued to act as sole editor, but with the August number Edward Moxon assumed responsibility and became editor, and his imprint replaced that of Hurst, Chance & Co. on the magazine.

Moxon provided much better fare and in this he was helped by Charles Lamb who contributed "Reminiscences of Elliston. By Elia" and "Hercules Pacificatus - A Tale from Suidas. By C.L." to the August issue. William Elliston, "the great lessee" of Drury Lane had died in June 1831. For these contributions Lamb received £10 but said he would keep the money in trust until he saw if Moxon's business prospered.[8] Others of Lamb's circle rallied round and Thomas Hood's fine poem "The Death Bed" which he had composed on the death of his sister, or as some think his mother, appeared in the same issue as Lamb's first contributions. Besides these there was a Sonnet by Alfred Tennyson, another by John Clare, a poem by Leigh Hunt and items by Sheridan Knowles, Thomas Pringle, John Forster, John Banim, the Hon. Mrs Norton, William Motherwell the poet and W P Scargill who wrote a book on Christ's Hospital and sent it to Lamb who denied receiving it.[9] A H Hallam also had a poem in this issue but his most notable contribution was his review of Tennyson's poetry. In this he wrote on some characteristics of modern poetry, severely criticized Robert Montgomery, had praise for Wordsworth and higher praise for Tennyson with specimens of his poetry. It is an interesting appraisal but Christopher North was critical of it and Professor Saintsbury described it as "a rather overrated thing."[10] The August issue also had an obituary notice of Mrs Siddons who had died on June 8.

The September number was again well supported by Lamb. No.1 of his "Peter's Net" series appeared, sub-titled "Recollections of a late Royal Academician." George Dawe, about whom Lamb wrote had died in 1829 and had an interesting life, painting many portraits of royalty and a great many of Russian notabilities, which are now in the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad. Lamb was rather unsympathetic to Dawe who was really an able though eccentric man; as Coleridge revealed he was somewhat antagonistic to soap and water. He wrote a *Life of George Morland* which is often praised. Lamb also contributed "Lines suggested by a sight of Waltham Cross. By C. Lamb." although in extended and much altered form from the lines as sent to Bernard Barton in September 1827.[11] This was followed by "The Latin Poems of Vincent Bourne", unsigned but also by Lamb. In the previous year he had included nine translations from Bourne in his *Album Verses* and in this article he contrived to review his own book as he admitted to Moxon. Other contributors this month included some verses "To Vincent Novello" signed "C.C." probably by Charles Cowden Clarke, an autobiographical sketch "Prodigious" by John Forster,[12] a poem "Anticipation" by Thomas Hood and items from Thomas Pringle, William Kennedy and the Hon. Mrs Norton.

In October Lamb had No.2 of "Peter's Net" On the total Defect of the faculty of Imagination observable in the works of modern British Artists reprinted in *The Last Essays of Elia* as "Newspapers Thirty-five years ago." There is not much else of interest in this number, although John Clare had a Sonnet, there were verses by William Motherwell and contributions by William Kennedy, W P Scargill, R C Trench and J L Sissons.

It appears that at this time all was not well with the magazine for an advertisement was inserted in *The Athenaeum* and *The Literary Gazette* stating that two shareholders were wanted for *The Englishman's Magazine*.[13] No doubt the trouble was financial and as no shareholders were forthcoming Moxon decided to cease publication and although the November issue was advertised it did not appear. That the decision was taken suddenly seems implied by Lamb's letter to Moxon on October 24[14] for he was in the midst of a further essay for his "Peter's Net" series. This was a continuation of that for October and it appeared in part in Moxon's *The Reflector* in December 1832, but it was ill-fated for that publication ceased before it could be finished and it eventually saw completion in *The Athenaeum* in 1833.

Lamb's letter to Moxon commiserated with him on the failure of *The Englishman's Magazine* but added that he had done wisely to curtail losses. After his efforts in the abortive *Reflector* Moxon was to concentrate on book publishing and to make his name as a publisher of poetry in a particularly attractive format. Among the writers whose work he issued were many of Charles Lamb's friends, including Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Leigh Hunt, Hood, Hazlitt, Rogers, James Kenney, George Darley, T N Talfourd, Allan Cunningham, Barron Field, B W Proctor, Sheridan Knowles and H F Cary. In addition Lamb's own works provided much employment for the publisher and

Moxon issued as well as *Album Verses* in 1830, *Satan in Search of a Wife* 1831, *The Last Essays of Elia* 1833, *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets* (with the Garrick Plays), 1835, *Poetical Works* 1836, *Letters* (Talfourd) 1837 and *Final Memorials* (Talfourd) 1848. Of the volume known as Lamb's *Works* he issued many editions from 1836, 1838, 1840 and later editions down to that known as the Purnell edition issued by the firm of Edward Moxon, Son & Co. in 1870, some twelve years after the death of the founder.

Christopher North writing in *Blackwood's Magazine* commented that *The Englishman's Magazine* was "a very pleasant periodical"[15] and ought not to have died. It had stood for reform and Moxon was interested in social and political matters, but perhaps he did not attract enough literary material of a high order to ensure its success. The editor too was increasingly interested in publishing poetry in book form and had only a relatively small amount of capital to fall back on.

NOTES AND SOURCES

1 *Letters of Charles & Mary Lamb.* Ed E V Lucas 1935. III, 56
2 *Edward Moxon: Publisher of Poets.* Harold G Merriam. 1966, 15
3 *Letters.* Lucas. III, 282
4 *D.N.B.* Articles on Leitch Ritchie & William Kennedy and Merriam 1966
5 *The Athenaeum* December 7, 1889
6 *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Narrative of the Events of his Life.* James Dykes Campbell 1894, 273
7 *D.N.B.* Article on Leitch Ritchie
8 *Letters.* Lucas. III, 322
9 do. III, 324
10 *A History of Criticism.* George Saintsbury 1911, 466n
11 *Letters.* Lucas. III, 128
12 Merriam. 35n
13 James Dykes Campbell in *The Athenaeum* December 7, 1889
14 *Letters.* Lucas. III, 324
15 Merriam. 31

BOOK REVIEWS

Grevel Lindop: *The Opium-Eater: A Life of Thomas De Quincey.* J M Dent & Sons Ltd. 1981. £12.

This is a good, big, sometimes leisurely biography of 392 pages, generously illustrated and really, by present-day standards, pretty cheap at the price. Its length may surprise at first in view of De Quincey's fairly uneventful life. But the quotation from De Quincey which precedes Grevel Lindop's account of his childhood alerts us to the very real problem which the biographer has to face. 'My labyrinthine childhood' mused De Quincey; and his labyrinthine childhood was only a prelude to a labyrinthine life.

His surface life was only intermittently so. A rather uninteresting childhood, mostly spent in the North West of England, a dull spell of adolescent servitude in a nondescript school at Manchester, a rather reclusive stay at Oxford... Unexciting spells in the Lakes too, with little to show for his avid reading and a disappointingly limited friendship with Wordsworth and the household at Allen Bank or Rydal Mount. Nor were his later years in Edinburgh rich in memorable incidents.

But all of this relates to the life of the surface, the life of friendships and actions and participation in public events. Where facts relating to these can be found Mr Lindop searches them out with assiduity, winnows them of De Quincey's subsequent elaborations in his autobiographical writings and combines them into an attractive narrative. But underneath the surface story the real drama of De Quincey's life goes on. First the unhappy childhood, with the deaths of his father and favourite sister and the long, uneasy relationship with his dominating, Evangelical mother. Then the years of emotional deprivation during which he turned the figures of Wordsworth and Coleridge (glimpsed behind the poetry of *Lyrical Ballads*) into messiahs and father figures that someday, somehow must be reached (only when he got within sight of Dove Cottage he lost his nerve and crept away). Ultimately his messiahs were to disappoint him. In particular, Wordsworth denied him the status of favourite disciple for which he longed. Sometimes he was submerged beneath his opium addiction: sometimes he struggled against it and his sufferings were extreme. De Quincey was a creature of paradoxes, of alternations. All his life he tended to have fits of creativity and then to run away.

But as is so often the case with writers of that period the responsibilities of marriage and a family imposed financial pressures upon him which make frightening reading even today. Just as he was learning to cope with his opium addiction and his neuroses and to write effectively he was hustled into rapid, often brilliant composition for the magazines by his financial problems. The original version of *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* was mostly dashed off in London coffee houses and noisy coaching inns while he was skulking from his creditors. He developed an extraordinary complex of insecurity, money worries, dissatisfaction with his own writing and a squirrel-like desire to hoard away saleable materials for an even more rainy day than the present one: he preferred to arrange his own cash flow by asking to be paid for his manuscripts in dribs and drabs. He hoarded away half-finished manuscripts and books in houses and hired rooms in Grasmere, Penrith, Edinburgh, Glasgow and probably other places besides. The history of all this is frequently exasperating and certainly very strange.

The task of relating De Quincey the outer man, whose struggles and agonies finally subsided into a child-like state of dependence on his grown-up daughters (who were clearly delightful) with the ultimately triumphant literary artist and private man is one which Mr Lindop manages with skill and sympathy. The reader ends by agreeing with him that 'our final impression is of a man both lovable and oddly heroic.'

De Quincey was blessed with good friends. Dorothy Wordsworth's letters to him in his bad times are wonderfully sympathetic. John Wilson ('Christopher North' of *Blackwood's Magazine*), a maddeningly inconsistent man, seems to have been at his best with him. The Lambs, as so often when they were dealing with struggling writers who were also struggling with difficulties caused by their own difficult personalities, were kindness's own self. 'They absolutely persecuted me with hospitalities; and, as it was by their fireside that I felt most cheered, I did not neglect to avail myself of the golden hours thus benignantly interposed among my hours of solitude' said De Quincey, recollecting his time in London during the composition of the *Confessions*, when his fortunes and his spirits were both at a particularly low ebb. Doubtless the signs of his opium addiction intensified their compassionate feelings: Coleridge's still-continuing tragedy was very close and real to them.

A mass of interesting information about early nineteenth-century magazine publication and its personalities comes out of De Quincey's biography, together with numerous vivid details that one would wish to quote if space were available. The chronology of De Quincey's life needed sorting out afresh and the story of his inner drama was worth examining anew. Grevel Lindop's biography is the first for forty-five years. It was time for a fresh investigation and the job has been well done.

Bill Ruddick

Renee Roff (compiler): *A Bibliography of the Writings of Charles and Mary Lamb*. New York: Nicholas T Smith, 1979 $22.00

This book is a facsimile reprint of Luther S Livingstone's bibliography plus the pages from J C Thomson's which list Lamb's contributions to periodicals. The editor's contribution is minimal, although Miss Roff must have been responsible for the choice of material. This work, out of date as it is, is clearly aimed at libraries, more specifically at libraries in American institutions of higher education, which seem vulnerable to the ploys of publishers' salesmen, particularly if what they have to sell comes in the form of a series of titles. One cannot avoid the impression that libraries' money would be better spent on modern works on the literature of the period, of which there has been no shortage in recent years.

One good thing, for me, has come out of examining this book: I have been reminded of that curious volume published in the United States as *Elia, Second Series* in a pirated edition in 1828. The matter is dealt with in some detail by Wallace Nethery in *Charles Lamb in America to 1848* (Worcester, Mass: Achille J St Onge, 1963), which includes a photograph of the book. Apparently Lamb became aware of its existence only in 1832, through Crabb Robinson, and had mixed feelings about it, annoyance at the piracy and pride that he was known and liked in a country so far away. He could not have known how his reputation there would grow with the years, so that now there are as many true Elians in America as in our own country.

BS

THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY GOES TO BRISTOL

Did you know that Mrs Southey was a conchologist? I didn't until I paid my annual visit to Mrs Doris Davis at Bristol. Her husband, Bertram Davis (remembered by older members of the Charles Lamb Society with great affection) was an authority on Robert Southey.

It was from Mrs E Boult, a relative of the poet, that the information was received, and a collection of Mrs Robert Southey's shells was given to Mr Davis in a large wooden box which contained more than a thousand shells, different specimens being in small separate partitions which were carefully lined with cotton wool. Mrs Boult also gave him a pretty little blue satin "Dorothy Bag" which Mrs Southey had made and decorated with small shells. This has now gone to the new museum at Grasmere which was opened officially on 1st October.

Another item of interest given to Mr Davis by Mrs Boult was one of Southey's walking sticks - a straight one of dark brown wood. It has a silver knob and is engraved "Olive from Bethlehem R.S. 1834" This is still in the possession of Mrs Davis. I held it in my hand and wondered how many miles it had traversed in those days a hundred or so years ago. It must be admitted that my visit was one to be treasured, and this account compiled from information given by Mrs Davis will serve as a reminder to me of a happy day in 1981, a day that by a lucky chance happened to be Mrs Davis's birthday.

FSR

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: from W F Giddings (Lamb B, 1916-23)

Dear Editor,

The latest number of the Charles Lamb Bulletin (page 83) brought on, for me, a tidal wave of nostalgia! Ledwith's comments connected with the early days of the Outlook brought this on.

His original date is, I think, correct; certainly it was either 1921 or 1922. The birth was the brainchild of one Barber of Lamb B and the very first number was entirely produced within that house. I well remember assisting in the "printing" of that first number; it was "jelly-graphed" in Lamb B dayroom. In these sophisticated days, I doubt whether many know that laborious process. The cover carried the head of a Red Indian gazing earnestly into space (clumsily drawn by me); I also contributed a very naive article on "Relativity" and also (I think) a short poem of outstanding banality.

The second number was printed on a small printing press in the Manual School, a team of enthusiastic amateurs learning the laborious process of setting up type by hand. These original two numbers are still in existence in the first of the bound volumes of the "Outlook" in the school library at Horsham.

Later it became a far more sophisticated publication, both in presentation and content. It is heartening to know that our first feeble efforts have borne such fruit and to think that it started in the house of Lamb.

NOTES

CROWSLEY MEMORIAL LECTURE

It was a great pleasure to have as our Lecturer this year Professor Alan Hill of Royal Holloway College, London, who is currently editing the later volumes of the *Collected Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*. We are happy to be able to print his lecture in this Bulletin.

MY DEAREST LOVE: LETTERS OF WILLIAM AND MARY WORDSWORTH 1810

Just published by the Trustees of Dove Cottage, this collector's item is a facsimile in up to six colours printed by the Scolar Press of the love letters between Wordsworth and his wife, which were discovered in 1977. These hitherto unknown letters reveal Wordsworth as a tender and passionate lover, an aspect of his personality not previously fully appreciated. Particulars can be obtained from Blackwell's Rare Books, Fyfield Manor, Fyfield, Oxford.

MARY WARD CENTRE APPEAL

The coffee morning and bring and buy sale held on 22nd September was a great success both socially and financially, and we were delighted to welcome David Head, Principal of the Centre who gave us encouraging news of the progress of the Appeal. As a result of this event £55 was raised for the new premises.

GENTLEMAN'S ROW, ENFIELD

We have written to Enfield Council supporting the objections made by the local Residents' Association and others to a proposed development of Brecon House and its grounds. This matter is now going to Appeal, following refusal of planning permission by the Council.

MR JOEL HAEFNER

It was a great pleasure to welcome Mr Haefner at the Ernest Crowsley Memorial Lecture in October. Mr Haefner is from the University of Iowa researching on the *London Magazine* and we wish him a pleasant and profitable stay here.

MRS DONALD POTTER

We were saddened to learn of the death of the wife of our member, Mr Donald Potter, and extend our sincere condolences to him and his family.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION LUNCHEON

SATURDAY 13th FEBRUARY 1982 at 12.30 pm for 1.15 pm
at the IVANHOE HOTEL, BLOOMSBURY STREET, WC1

We are delighted that Miss Elizabeth Tucker, MA, Headmistress of Christ's Hospital, Hertford has agreed to be our Guest of Honour for the 1982 Luncheon.

As the Hon. Secretary will be abroad at this time, Mrs Wickham has gallantly agreed to be responsible for the arrangements during January and February, and we are sure that members will give her every support.

Applications for tickets should be made to: Mrs N L Wickham, 116 Parsonage Manorway, Belvedere, Kent, enclosing a cheque (payable to the Charles Lamb Society) to cover the cost of tickets at £9.50 each and a stamped addressed envelope.

When applying for tickets, annual subscriptions may be paid at the same time. Please notethe new subscription rates effective from 1.1.1982.

Donations towards maintaining and extending the work of the Society are always most welcome.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1982

Members are reminded that annual subscriptions are due on 1 January, 1982, and that revised rates are as follows:

Personal:	London	(single)	£4.50
		(double)	£6.00
	Provincial	(single)	£3.00
		(double)	£4.50
	Overseas		$12.00
Corporate:	UK		£7.50
	Overseas		$18.00

Cheques should be made payable to the Charles Lamb Society and sent to the Hon. Treasurer. R Houston Wallace, Flat 3, 47 Sussex Square, Brighton, Sussex, BN2 1GE unless they are included when paying for luncheon tickets.